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The Lights May Glow Some

CPYRGHT

The lights may glow some in the semi-darkness of the world of espionage.

If they do, they'll be coming on in a Baltimore courtroom. The show may compete favorably with some on screen, on television or in books.

One Erik Heine, an Estonian emigre, is suing another Estonian, Juri Raus. The complaint is slander. Heine wants \$110,000 damages. He says Raus, without justification and in departure from truth, called him a Communist and a Soviet agent. Heine had some reputation as a "freedom fighter" in Europe; it seems.

Adding to the murkiness of the matter is the fact that Raus is an admitted agent of the Central Intelligence Agency. On one occasion, CIA lawyers have tried to keep Raus from having to answer questions in open court or otherwise.

The CIA also has told the court:

"When Juri Raus spoke concerning the plaintiff on the occasions about which complaint is made, he was acting within the scope and course of his employment by the agency on behalf of the United States."

This is designed to place about Raus the mantle of official protection for whatever was said and done in the course of being a CIA agent.

Espionage can be a dirty business, an embarrassing thing for a democracy within a republic, as this country is.

The trial of the slander suit in Baltimore is bound to raise questions that are trying to sensitive minds.

An individual right to a good

reputation remains valid. But there also remains the question: Shall the preservation of this right be permitted to jeopardize the entire United States counter-espionage apparatus?

There also is this question: Should an admitted counterspy, who concealed his CIA connection for a year after suit was filed, be allowed the complete shield of official immunity to legal processes?

The questions at bar are more important than accrue to the ordinary slander complaint.